

United States Senate

June 20, 2019

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

I am writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the rules and decisions the Census Bureau has planned to address missing, incomplete, conflicting, or duplicate responses resulting from its data collection during the 2020 Census.

The Census Bureau; state, tribal, and other local governments; and others devote considerable effort, expense, and attention to help the Bureau collect complete information during the decennial census. This includes an extensive and costly follow-up operation by the Bureau targeting non-responsive households. Yet the Bureau typically concludes its field data collection with large numbers of incomplete, conflicting, or duplicate responses, in addition to the many households from which it has received no information whatsoever.

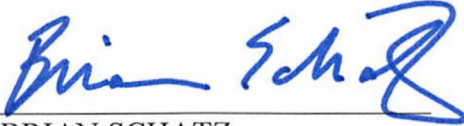
In prior decennial censuses, the Census Bureau has implemented a variety of decisions—or “business rules”—to address these kinds of data-deficient cases, comprising a sequence of procedures as part of the agency’s Response Processing Operation. These procedures are implemented before the Census Bureau tabulates its official census numbers, and play a key role in the Bureau’s delivery of a complete count in fulfillment of its constitutional responsibility.

Since the 2020 Census includes numerous innovations and other design changes—such as relying on administrative records, providing additional options for households to self-respond to the decennial census, and increasing the automation of its field data collection—that may affect the extent to which the Bureau may encounter data-deficient cases, I ask that GAO:

- 1) Identify the Census Bureau’s planned business rules for resolving missing, incomplete, conflicting, or duplicate information it receives from its data collection efforts for the 2020 Census;
- 2) Determine how these planned business rules for the 2020 Census differ, if at all, from those used in previous recent censuses; and
- 3) Report on the Census Bureau’s justifications for any significant changes, as well as the Bureau’s expectations regarding the resulting effect of these changes on either census cost or quality.

If you have questions, please contact Trelaine Ito at (202) 224-3934. Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brian Schatz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Schatz" clearly legible.

BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator